

[Lizzie Linberger]

July 23, 1939

Lizzie Linberger, Housewife

Newton, N.C.

Ethel Deal, Writer.

Dudley W. Crawfords Reviser.

Original Names Changed Names

Newton, N.C. Bakerton, N.C.

Lizzie Linberger Mrs. Lula Leonard

Fred Linberger Frank Leonard C9 - 1/22/41 - N.C. Box 1.

"Come in," said Mrs. Leonard, as I knocked on the door. She was barefooted, hair combed straight back and done up in a tight knot. Her dress open half way down the front and pinned with a big safety pin. "Take off your things and set down if you can find a place." Every chair was full of unfinished sewing. I moved some of it and sat down. The radio was going full blast, and I had to guess at much of her talk. She resumed her seat at the sewing machine and continued.

"I declare I can't keep this house fitten to look at since the younguns is out of school. They don't do a thing but make a mess. I try to sew to make a little spending money, if I don't, I ain't got none." A long table near the window was covered with patterns, tape measure and cloth. "Have you always sewed, Mrs. Leonard?" "No, I haven't always sewed— you see,

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sewing don't pay. I went to work when I was fourteen, made seven-fifty a week. Now, here I set and sew all day, and if I make two dollars a week I am doing good. The trouble is, the people can go to the store and buy a dress cheaper than they can buy the cloth, thread and trimmin' and hire it made. The reason I am swarmed with work is I jist got back from a two weeks vacation.

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My parents are cotton mill people.

"It takes all Frank makes to live on," said Mrs Leonard, still running the machine and talking at the same time. "He makes twenty eight dollars a week. I tell him he carries too much insurance. Two policies on himself; one on all of us and then that burial insurance on the whole family. It jist keeps us hardup. We pay ten dollars a month fer this house, and a light bill. No water bill up here as we git our water from a well. He still owes some on the frigidaire and he puts two - fifty in the building and loan. I tell him I'd ruther have a little now, as so much after he's dead. What makes me so mad is, he is sich a poor manager. I could take the money and make it go further and have more. We do have a plenty to eat, as he would always live good; but I'd like to have something else.

"I told Frank this morning I git so sick and tired of staying here working, I don't know what to do; but little sympathy you git out of a man though. Before you marry them, they make all kinds of promises and after they git you, that's another thing. That's one hard headed man.

"I can't turn that radio off till I hear that program. I listen to it every day." While she listened at the story, I made a note of what was in the room.

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Besides the living room suite and table, there was a whatnot in ones corner. The shelves containing pictures of the family made at different ages. Above the mantel hung a picture of the Lord's Supper. A picture in a large gilt frame of a young man in uniform hung over

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beside the organ. "That's my brother who use to be in the standing army," she said "He's d dead now."

As the radio program came to a close she said, "I can't hardly wait every day to hear that story. I live out here two miles from towns and it's jist like being in jail. Nobody comes, and I can't git nowhere. Frank never wants to go any place, and if he does, its to preaching, or town to work.

"I go to the show two or three times a week, and we go to ride on Sundays, we don't go to church often. That's another thing Frank don't like. I tell him I'm jist as good as them that goes, and better than some. I wouldn't mind going to church if there wasn't so many hypocrites in it; so I stay at home and read my Bible. I ain't fot got no edication. I never went no further than the first grade— I can read though; I picked that up myself. I like stories, that's about all I read but the Bible. It embarrasses me to go out among people, 'cause I got no edication and that's one reason I don't go to church.

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"Yes, I have three children living and I got eight dead. That's enough to kill anybody without anything else." Do you ever get to see your mother?" I asked. "Yes, I get to go to see my Mammy about once a year. Mammy was always sickly, and she sewed a lot too. I had to stay at home and help her when I was young. " Some people think a woman has a easy time. House work is the hardest thing on a woman I know of. I git up here every morning at four-thirty, as Frank has to be at the mill at six. He works eight hours, and I try to have dinner ready when he gits home. After the kitchen is cleaned up, I sew, and sewing is a hard job. It gits on my nerves. My doctor says sewing is the worse thing a woman can do.

"Another thing bothers me is visitors. I like company good as anybody, but I like comers and goers; not comers and stayers. Every summer Frank wants me to can stuff to feed an

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army. Right there in the closet in a couple hundred jars left over. We can't use all of it, so I give away lots of it this spring. Still its can, can something every day. He's never satisfied.

"About time I start canning in the summer, all the relations on both sides decide to come on a visit. One of my nieces has been here all summer; one of his was here two weeks; a nephew on his side stayed four 5 weeks, and now my uncle is coming in August to stay until Christmas. He gits the old age pension and jist visits. The company always sits out in the cool and enjoys theirself, while I am in the kitchen. I am going to make it a rule for them to help do the work.

"Come let's go to the kitchen. I got to make a fire in the stove and start dinner. I am hungry, as I eat breakfast so early." The kitchen was clean and comfortable. Two screened windows let in a cool breeze. Clean white curtains fluttered from the rods. The kitchen furniture consisted of a long eating table with a blue oil cloth, a blue and white range, a kitchen cabinet, a china cupboard, [?] [On?] one of the shelves of the cupboard was a big white frosted cake. Going to the cupboard, she said, "I want you to have a piece of my cake. I made it this morning after Frank went to work. It's pineapple, I don't know if you'll like it or not." She took two small hand painted plates from the cabinet and served two large slices.

"You have got to stay and have dinner with us. Frank and the children will be glad. Don't tell him though you are writing my story, he might not like it, he is so peculiar. I've been married to him for twenty six years, and I don't know him yit.

"I have two boys, nine and twelve. One is in the eighth grade and one in the fourth grade. I make 6 my younguns go to school and study hard, as I want them to have a better chance than I've had.

I used to keep boarders when we lived in town. I kept six men and they paid me five dollars a week. Every saturday, I took in thirty dollars. Them men said they had never been fed better. Course, I bought in large quantities. I'd buy a eight pound roast for dinner

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on Monday, and with the roast, I'd serve cold slaw, potatoes and pie. What was left of the roast, I served on Wednesday, sliced cold with vegetables. They liked fried pies too, dried fruit was so cheap. I fried pies and always kept them warm. These was fine with fresh butter.

"Vegetable soup was another good stand by. When its made right, it answers the purpose of a whole meal. I'd git about three pounds of boneless stew, cutting it up fine, and put it in a big cooker. When is was tender, I would put in about a half of gallon of sliced irish potatoes and some carrots, and when they was done, I added three cans of tomatoes, a can of okra, and two of corn. The men raved over this soup served with hot biscuits, coffe and egg custard.

"Now, I really want you to stay for dinner. I wouldn't have asked, if I didn't want you to stay. I won't have no soup, but I'll have something better or jist as good. I've got fresh butter beans right out 7 of the garden. My squash is so good and tender, it'll go good with the tomatoes and beans. I am not having meat today, but I got fresh butter and cake.

"I made eight quarts of apple butter and have a dish of it left over for dinner. I made thirty two jars of cucumber pickles, and I am going to can sweet pickle peaches this week. I've already canned my beets, beans and berries. I made four gallons of jam. Nobody here cares much for it. I'll have it on hand if they do want it.

"They say a rolling stone gathers no moss. I guess that's why we got nothing. We do keep a good car. Frank won't do without one, I'd like to have a home, but I'd rather have a car if I am going to live in the country. There now, my dinner's ready. I'll set down and coll a minute. I wan't take out the ice for the tea till they git here. Frank likes his meals hot. He has to eat cold lunch so much." Mrs. Leonard mopped her face with her clean white apron.

"No, I don't believe in women voting. I voted a couple of times to please my husband, but I think it's wrong. The Bible says it's a sin for a woman to speak in public, so I say its worse for them to vote." The door opened and Frand and the children came in. Each washed his

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face and combed his hair; the children scrambling and arguing over the wash basin. At the table we bowed our heads while Mr. 8 Leonard offered thanks. The meal consisted of hot biscuits, corn muffins, fresh butter and butter milk, ice tea, butter beans cooked with bacon, squash fried brown, sliced tomatoes with dressing, blackberry jam, apple butter, a dish of cold boiled ham, and pineapple cake.

Mr. Leonard talked of his work in the mill. "I'm a loom fixer, been working in the mill ever since I was fourteen. I got married at sixteen. Don't know any other work. I'm working now in the silk mill. I used to make thirty dollars a week, but they cut wages a few years ago. I now make twenty eight. The Super in a fine man to work for; that is, if you do the thing that's right. He won't hire just any type of person; they pick their help. We have college men in the mill weaving. One man studied for a doctor got him a job weaving. Once a year the mill sends the fixers some place for a day to a textile meeting. The mill bears the expenses. This keeps us in ship shape for our work. It also gives us a day of recreation we wouldn't get otherwise. People working today and making good, has to be careful not to get in the rut. Your mind needs a rest from the daily grind as well as your body. Money spent on recreation and improvement is not wasted. I work through the whole year. I get one day off once a year and it makes me feel like a different person. 9 "The company works over two hundred hands. Each one of them has life insurance, carried by the company. That makes us feel good. If we get hurt accidentally our expenses is paid and we draw a certain amount each week. I have worked in several mills. I started as a doffer. I made six dollars a week. I have been here ten years. If work stays good, I'll make this my home."

"I hope I won't have to stay in the country" said Mrs. Leonard, pouring tea.

"I like it out here" Frank continued, "One thing it's cheaper, and I like to have good gardens. I used to keep a cow and chickens, but I found it didn't pay. We had so much butter and milk, we couldn't use it, and nobody would eat or drink it. Now, I buy it and everybody can't get enough."

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“No, I never went to school; what little I know I learned it myself. If I had a little education when I started out I might have done better.”

The youngest boy, who had been silent during the meals asked, “Daddy, if you'd got more education, could you make more money?” “Certainly.” the father replied. “I'd be telling other people what to do, in the place of them telling me.” The boy batted his eyes and grinned, “Golly, I am going to learn my books.” Everybody laughed as we arose from the table.

“Well, we'll see if you enjoyed your dinner or 10 not. If you come back soon to eat with us, I'll know you enjoyed it— if you don't, I'll think you didn't.